



James W. Kurth Presented with Theodore Roosevelt Lifetime Achievement Award

Washington, D.C., May 22, 2018 - The National Wildlife Refuge Association is honored to present James W. Kurth, Deputy Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with our highest award, the Theodore Roosevelt Lifetime Achievement Award. Mr. Kurth has devoted his life to the protection and conservation of our nation's wildlife and wild places and serves as a mentor and role model for new generations of conservationists throughout America.

"Jim has been a friend, colleague, and inspiration to me personally for nearly four decades," said Geoffrey Haskett, President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. "He takes the long view of the shared stewardship of our nation's natural resources as a journey that never ends. Every day there are people doing what they can to protect and enhance our wildlife heritage and Jim is confident that these efforts coalesce and make a real difference whether you are working as a government employee, for a non-profit, or in your backyard."

Jim's conservation ethic, rooted in the writings of Aldo Leopold he studied as a wildlife management student at the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, has guided his career and is something he demonstrates to everyone he meets. In fact, it is not uncommon to see Jim's well-worn copy of *A Sand County Almanac*, tucked in a pile of papers for a meeting. Jim's guiding ethos is simply caring – about people, about land, and about strengthening the relationships between them.

Every one of Jim's duty stations and jobs positioned him to be the leader he is today. Helping recover a species that had dwindled to just 40 birds in the wild at Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR (MS) gave him the confidence to know that such things were possible with hard work and sound science. Serving as a Federal Wildlife Officer at Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee NWR (FL) solidified his dedication to build a world class team of wildlife law enforcement nationwide. Establishing one of the oldest volunteer "Friends" groups in the nation at Seney NWR (MI) showed him the power and necessity of community engagement. And his role as Refuge Manager at the Arctic NWR (AK) engaged his passionate support of wilderness, where natural processes proceed without the interference of man.

But above all, Jim is a dedicated civil servant, firmly believing that the people of the United States have created, and will protect, the world's greatest network of conservation lands and waters, the National Wildlife Refuge System. For that, in 2015, he was awarded the Distinguished Presidential Rank Award by the Department of the Interior, the highest award for members of the Senior Executive Series (SES) recognized for sustained extraordinary accomplishment. This rank is granted to no more than 1% of the career SES staff.

Those who know Jim know just how deserving he is for this award, but also know that he will be reluctant to accept the accolades. He will humbly say that he's just a "simple country game warden." And in the



most basic sense, he's right. He, like the country game wardens who came before him, is a humble civil servant working to protect the lands and waters of this great nation, one critter at a time, one day at a time. We think Theodore Roosevelt may have looked at himself as a simple country game warden as well, whose ultimate job is to preserve wildlife for future generations.

We at the National Wildlife Refuge Association are delighted to formally honor Jim's exemplary career and to publicly recognize his partnership, passion, dedication and leadership.

Mr. Kurth's award will be presented on May 24, 2018, at the National Wildlife Refuge Association's Annual Awards Dinner in Washington, D.C.

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The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is to conserve America's wildlife heritage for future generations through strategic programs that protect, enhance, and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries that secure its ecological integrity. For more information, visit www.refugeassociation.org or contact Desirée Sorenson-Groves, National Wildlife Refuge Association, 202-417-3803.